of island jetties. In addition, areas of Tourism and Services have been included for cooperation.

(b) While no agreements were signed to boost cooperation in tourism, India has agreed to set up a hotel management training institute, *viz* Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies with full Indian assistance. The foundation stone laying ceremony of this Institute was performed during the recent visit of Prime Minister. Besides constructing this Institute, India shall also be providing training facilities to Maldivian students in various streams connected with hotel and tourism industry. This would equip the Maldivians with specialised capabilities to meet the growing needs of Maldives' premier economic sector of tourism. Accordingly, India has also increased the number of training facilities being provided to the Maldivian student made under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme.

Expert Group meetings between India and China

1715. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the meetings of the expert group of India and China held in June, 2002, failed to sort out mutual differences with China on the 545 kms. long border in middle sector;

(b) whether Indo-China ties hinge on the border issue; and

(c) if so, what sincere efforts are being made by both the countries to strengthen their relations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The 12th meeting of the India-China Expert Group (EG) of diplomatic and Military Officials was held in Beijing on June 17, 2002. Discussions were begun on the clarification of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Western Sector of India-China boundary. Maps have already been exchanged to clarify the LAC in the Middle Sector.

(b) and (c) Government of India is committed to the development of friendly and cooperative relations with China on the basis of the principles of Panchsheel, mutual sensitivity to each other's concerns and equality. We are moving ahead on various areas of bilateral cooperation while sustaining a continuous dialogue to address our differences.